



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Where Is Jesus? (Luke 8:22-25)

OCTOBER 1, 2013

Jeff Whitebread / 484-680-4260 / Jeff.Whitebread@capitolcom.org

Luke enters the portion of his account in which Jesus' sovereign power over nature, demons, disease, and death is highlighted. From each of these four narratives the underlying question that Luke wants the reader to ask regarding Jesus is found on the lips of the disciples in Luke 8:25, "Who then is this?" This section of the Gospel account is still framed within the context of proclaiming and bringing the good news. In the preceding accounts that have led up to this demonstration of power, the common theme presented from the parable of the soils and the incident with Jesus' mother and brothers is the expectation of obedience to those who have the message of good news proclaimed to them. A person is identified as possessing a good heart through the harvest that is reaped from their life and has the privilege of belonging to the family of Jesus by hearing and doing the word of God. Beginning with calming the storm Jesus is shown as one whose words possess authority because of this revealed power. In Luke's second volume he records for us the first gospel message proclaimed by Peter where he announces that Jesus of Nazareth was "a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know (Acts 2:22). This power of Jesus not only validates his message, but also confronts us with one who is unmanageable, one who is beyond our control and often our comprehension.

This Peter was the same man who is in the boat with the other disciples and feared of death because of the violence of the storm. He is of the company who struggled to control the elements as Jesus slept in the back of the boat. What should have given him and the other disciple's confidence in the midst of the storm, a trust that the perils they faced, while real, were in the control of the eternal God. It was in the simplicity of this one fact; Jesus was in the boat with them. He was with them because in obedience to his command they were crossing the lake as instructed. Jesus is not oblivious to the dangers facing those who followed him, but he calls those who join him on this journey to remember that being with Jesus is a call to walk by faith. He expects those who follow him to place their confidence not in the circumstances that surround their life, but in the simple belief that there is no safer place than with him. In this we are reminded of Jesus' words in John 17:23, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

Luke 8:22-25 - (22) One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, (23) and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. (24) And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. (25) He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled,

saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"

THE CALL

Let us go across to the other side of the lake – As clearly revealed in Luke's account of the activities surrounding the voyage across the Sea of Galilee Jesus is seen as the initiator of this expedition. He has been on a preaching tour which had taken him through the towns and villages in the southern portion of Galilee. Now he seeks to travel back, most likely to Capernaum before embarking on the next phase of his ministry which includes sending out the Twelve. Due to their current location and the position of their destination, they would most likely need to traverse through the center part of this body of water. While some on the boat were experienced fishermen, and were most likely travelling on one of their vessels, this journey was not without its risks. Their experience would have likely been closer to the shore and they would not have ventured out into deep water where a sudden storm could have endangered them and damaged their boat. They had certainly been in deep water previously, specifically at the command of Jesus when they took a large catch of fish and Peter made his commitment to be a fisher of men. As with the previous request, they heed Jesus' words and set sail to their destination confident in their arrival. Any concern is probably set aside, even if this journey may take them outside their comfort zone, because after all, they are with Jesus.

THE CRISIS

And a wind-storm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water – This excursion begins normally enough. Jesus must have been exhausted from ministering to the crowds because Luke gives the impression by the language he employed that Jesus fell asleep immediately. All is going according to plan, they are navigating across the sea, their master and probably others are resting in the boat. Suddenly it happens, a storm hits and that nagging thought which might have been in the back of their minds now becomes reality. Those in the boat are now confronted with the most dangerous voyage they have ever faced. Geographically the Sea of Galilee is situated at the base of the Jordan Rift and sits several hundred feet below sea level. As cool currents rush down the rolling hills through narrow passages they collide with the heated air above the lake's basin which produces violent winds which are capable of whipping the lake into a fury. These atmospheric conditions result in sudden and frequent storms which are treacherous to such vessels. The disciples tried everything they knew to deal with this situation; they employed every tactic that their years of experience had taught them. When all seemed lost and they were at their wits end,

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS AT 8:00AM, ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING

Pennsylvania

Where Is Jesus? (Luke 8:22-25)

undone by the danger that faced them and their master they cry out for Jesus. Apparently this was not in the hope of being rescued, but they sought for him to share in their doom. The risk of putting their complete trust in this “Messiah” had finally proved fatal, not only to him, but also for them.

THE COMMAND

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves – The first thing that jumps out concerning this passage is the simplicity and ease with which Jesus dispenses with the storm which had shaken those who were no strangers to the sea. In addressing this tempest Jesus did not perform some incantation, roll up his sleeves or brace himself for some epic battle. As he responds to the disciples’ cry for help, he clears the sleep from his eyes, surveys the situation, and rebukes the wind and the waves in a way that one might tell a child to be quiet when roused from sleep. The shocking thing is that the wind and the waves obeyed his command. The lake was still, not a wave, not a ripple; its surface was as smooth as glass. This is not natural, when the winds stop the waves still crash onto the shore for hours due to the effects of a storm. The disciples were confronted with a new reality. The common understanding of the ancient culture was the uncontrollable nature of the sea by any power but God. Jesus actions show once again to his disciples and all that would have ears that hear of the power he possesses. In his interactions with the world he reveals his divinity by doing things that are only possible by God himself.

Where is your faith? – Jesus’ next statement to the disciples is more earth shaking than the fact he calmed the storm. In asking the question, “Where is your faith?” he reveals his expectation for those who would follow him. In Jesus estimation those who obeyed his command to set off toward the other side of the Sea of Galilee should have known better. This may seem a bit challenging, because we wonder if we would have fared any better. J. Gresham Machen makes this statement about how one should understand the conception of history and doctrine. He states that, Jesus dying on the cross is history, Jesus death on a cross as a sacrifice for sin is doctrine. Faith is applying both history and doctrine to one’s life, so in faith one believes that Jesus’ death on the cross was a sacrifice for their sins. When life’s storms have pushed us to the brink, when all seems lost and we feel as if we are alone and God is absent from our life, it is in these moments that Jesus’ words resonate in our hearts and we hear him calling us back to faith. He forces us to connect the dots of our experience to his truth and believe him once again. He is not distant or disinterested from our situation, but if we are following him then he is right there with us in the storms of this life. He is calling us to trust that no matter the shape of the world or life itself, there is no safer place for us than being with him. Yet this choice of following

Jesus is a walk of faith, and in this life we will be forced to choose to believe in him every step of the way.

THE CONCERN

And they were afraid – What an experience this must have been for those in the boat. As the urgency of the moment passes they are forced once again to make sense of what they had encountered. When the storm raged around them they had lost all hope of survival as they were confronted with the unmanageable nature of the storm. Yet now, as they sit on a completely calm lake they are terrified once again, but this time for a different reason. They no longer fear death by being ship wrecked at sea, but they begin to fear the one who has been with them in the boat this whole time. In Jesus they are beginning to see one who has unmanageable power; however, his exercise of this power does not always align with their expectations. As this incident in the boat reveals, he does not always do things according to our plans, or in a way that makes sense to us. But if Jesus is God and loves us, he has some reason for letting his people go through the things they cannot understand. He is showing he can love somebody and still let bad things happen to them because he is God and knows better than they do. Our security then must be understood on the basis of doing the will of God and not on the challenges that surround our lives. What we experience is often beyond our largest notion of what God is doing. In these moments we must seek to discern God’s purposes in the light of following a king who was crucified.

APPLICATION

Biblical scholars have noted the almost identical nature of this account with that of Jonah’s voyage when fleeing God’s will. In Jonah 1:12 he reveals the need of sacrificing himself to save those on the ship, “If I die you will live.” Next we find Jesus comparing himself with Jonah when he declares, “now someone greater than Jonah is here (Matthew 12:41).” Jesus the true Jonah, one day is going to calm all storms. On the cross, like Jonah, he willingly threw himself into the ultimate storm. He threw himself into the storm of eternal justice until he was ultimately swept away. For those who claim Christ they must consider this truth, if Jesus did not abandon you in the ultimate storm what makes you think that he will abandon you in the much smaller storms you are now facing?

Stanley E. Porter & Craig A. Evans. Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

Timothy Keller. King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus (New York, NY: Penguin Group (USA) Inc. 2011).